

UCEPS SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY

HOW MUCH OF NATO DO UKRAINIANS WANT?



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None other than fate has placed Ukraine between the two strongest European centres of power that also happen not to be the best of friends — NATO and Russia. Given the situation, Ukraine intends to build its security by keeping to the non-alliance principle. At first glance, this policy seems to serve two masters, but in reality, it's non-viable. It has become clear that our country cannot stick to this position very long, and Ukraine will be in a position to either take someone's side, or risk being torn apart, as happened repeated times in the past.

Strengthening co-operative ties with NATO offers Ukraine one of the few possible options for ensuring its national security. But are Ukrainians themselves willing to take this opportunity as their western neighbours are doing, or do they have something else in mind and, namely, what?

Between May 26 and June 4, 2000, sociological service of Ukrainian Centre for Economic and Political Studies polled 2005 citizens aged over 18 in all of Ukraine's regions. The main aim of the survey was to find out the population's attitude toward NATO, and Ukraine's relations with this Alliance.

Having reviewed the "vox populi", we decided to present some ideas on the forms, depth of, and reasons for and against the development of Ukraine's relations with NATO.

SO, THAT'S WHAT YOU ARE, "COMRADE NATO"!

First of all, let's see how Ukrainians perceive NATO.

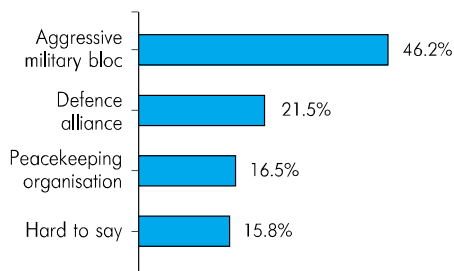
At present, **nearly half of Ukraine's population (46.2%) perceives NATO as an aggressive bloc** (*Diagr. "What do you think NATO is, first and foremost?"*). This has not always been the case. For instance, according to the "Democratic Initiatives" Foundation, in January, 1997, only 17.3% of Ukrainian citizens considered NATO

to be an aggressive bloc¹. Ukrainians' opinion was very much affected by NATO actions in Kosovo last year. Evidently, the average Ukrainian was not entirely convinced that the main purpose of the NATO action was to defend Albanians, rather than punish "disobedient" Serbs.

Only 8.6% of those polled considers NATO actions to be a forced, but necessary measure to protect Kosovars, and only 8.5% suggests that military intervention was needed to stop

¹ Ukraine and NATO: the attitude of Ukraine's population toward NATO. — The Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, "Democratic Initiatives" Foundation. — January, 1997.

What do you think NATO is, first and foremost?
% of the polled



Yugoslavia's aggressive policy. By contrast, 33.6% of polled Ukrainians sees NATO actions in Yugoslavia as acts of aggression, while another 19.3%, as war crimes against the civilian population. 14.1% of those polled remained neutral, as they were certain that neither NATO nor Yugoslavia should be blamed for the conflict, but the UN, which appeared unable to resolve the situation through peaceful means.

The reason for such assessments probably lies not in a specific attitude toward Yugoslavia, but in the fact that, according to the majority of respondents, NATO had no right to interfere in the internal affairs of a sovereign state (even for purposes of resolving humanitarian problems). This view is shared by 55.1% of those polled. Only 11.9% of respondents believes that NATO has such a right, and 26.1%, that NATO should have such a right under a UN mandate. Perhaps, if KFOR spared no efforts to protect Serbs from Albanians, as NATO did last year to protect Albanians from Serbs, more Ukrainians would believe in the Alliance's peaceful intentions.

After Kosovo, even in the most pro-NATO inclined Western Ukraine, as much as 29.8% of respondents considers NATO to be an aggressive military bloc. It is interesting to note that on this issue, pro-NATO Western Ukraine does not significantly differ from the pro-Russian Crimea, where 32% holds the same opinion. Only 15.3% of Crimeans believes that Ukraine should never join the Tashkent Treaty, while among all Ukrainians, this view is shared by 42.2%. When choosing between Russia and NATO, Crimeans are probably motivated by their traditional pro-Russian sentiments, rather than by hostility toward NATO.

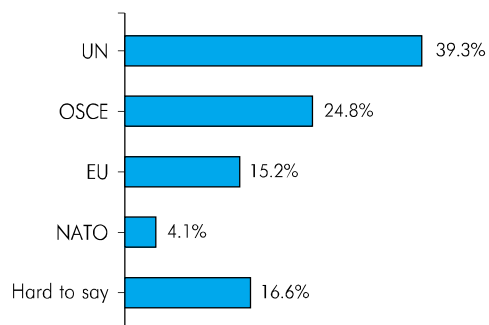
To be sure, the attitude of Ukrainians toward NATO is conditioned, among other things, by the heritage of Soviet anti-NATO propaganda, and the sympathy of some regions toward Russia's tough stance. This is confirmed by the fact that

the most hostile perception of NATO (56.1%) was demonstrated in the 'proletarian' Russian-speaking East of Ukraine, where more than 60% spoke out in favour of restoring the USSR², and almost three-fourths (73.1%) of the population name a Russian and CIS orientation as the country's main foreign policy priorities.

The remainder of Ukraine's citizens, 53.8%, or the majority, does not consider NATO to be an aggressive bloc. 21.5% of the polled sees NATO as a defence alliance, and 16.5% is certain of NATO as a peacekeeping organisation. And their position is not without grounds. Indeed, how could the better-off (than Ukrainians) Czechs, together with the Poles and Hungarians, join NATO for purposes of entering a so-called "aggressive bloc"? It is hard to believe that the purpose for so doing was to threaten their neighbours with aggression. And a dozen of our western neighbours, not to mention the Baltic states, are doing their best to become NATO members — are they so attracted by its aggressiveness?

Another 15.8% of those polled could not decide how they perceive NATO. It is likely that for these people military problems are not among the main priorities. Their number almost coincides with the number of those who suggest the main guarantor of security in Europe not to be the defensive union (NATO), but the economic union (the EU) — 15.2%.

Leading institution for ensuring regional security in Europe,
% of the polled



If we speak about *ensuring European security*, only 4.1% of Ukrainians sees NATO as its main guarantor (*Diagr. "Leading institution for ensuring regional security in Europe"*). A majority of our compatriots entrusts this mission to the United Nations Organisation (39.3%) and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (24.8%).

Therefore, Ukraine's population is not yet convinced with the idea within the State

² Results of the poll held by the UCEPS sociological service between January 25 - February 5, 2000. On the whole, 2010 citizens aged over 18 were polled in all of Ukraine's regions.



Programme of Ukraine-NATO Co-operation through the Year 2001 that "Ukraine sees NATO as the most effective structure of collective security in Europe, and an important element of the pan-European security system".

Such a low rating for NATO among regional security organisations is probably the result of the fact that only 10.5% believes in NATO's desire to defend Ukraine in the event of aggression, or the threat of aggression. Slightly more than a third (37.5%) of respondents believes that NATO would defend Ukraine if it were its member, while roughly the same number (36.9%), that it would not.

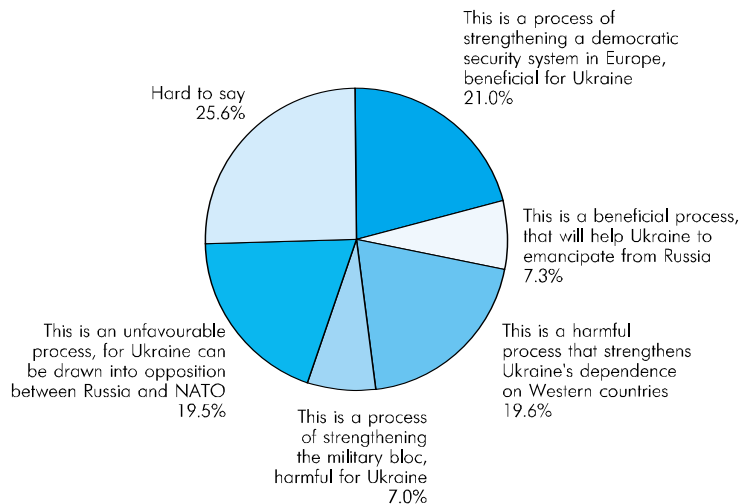
In this context, the population's position regarding Ukraine's possible accession to NATO is clear. Half (50.6%) of respondents considers that Ukraine should never join NATO, a quarter (23.4%) said that it should join the Alliance in 5-10 years time, and 9.3% of those polled responded that Ukraine should join NATO within 10-15 years.

It is interesting to compare these data with the opinion of experts questioned by UCEPS at one of its recent "round tables". The polled experts, mostly representatives of the highest echelons of the executive and legislative branches, and leading scholars in the field of national security, gave the following responses: 41% — Ukraine should never join NATO, 15% — Ukraine should join NATO in 5-10 years, another 44% — in 10-15 years. Quite likely, those

polled were mostly experts who often visit the West and see all of NATO's benefits with their own eyes (*Diagr. "Ukraine should join NATO"*).

So, the general picture is such, that even after the allied operation in Kosovo, which was unpopular in Ukraine, almost two-thirds (59%)

Attitude of Ukrainian citizens to NATO enlargement,
% of the polled

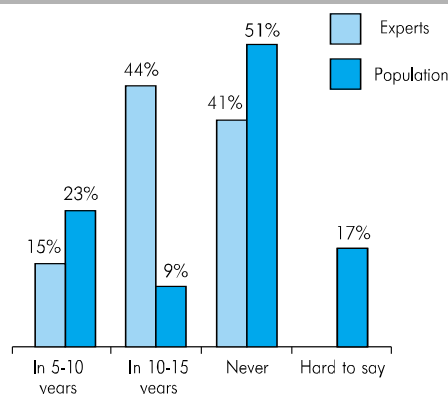


of the country's elite and one-third (32.7%) of its population support NATO membership. If NATO is successful in enforcing peace in the Balkans, and the process of the European Union's enlargement does not cut Ukrainians from the West, this percentage will probably rise.

It should be noted that Ukrainians treat NATO quite differently from Belorussians and Russians. Only 8.2% of Belorussians believes that Belarus should ensure its security by joining NATO³. In Russia, only 19% of respondents names their country joining the Alliance a priority, while the share of those that consider NATO an aggressive bloc is higher in Russia (56%) than in Ukraine⁴.

The process of NATO enlargement also met with mixed assessments among respondents. 21.0% of those polled considers that this process means the strengthening of a democratic security system in Europe, and is beneficial for Ukraine. Another 7.3% sees this process as favourable, or the one that would help emancipate Ukraine from Russia. Almost half of our citizens gave a negative assessment of this process. 19.6% of those polled considers NATO enlargement to be an unfavourable process, as it would strengthen Ukraine's dependence on the West. Almost as many — 19.5% — fears that as

Ukraine should join NATO,
% of the polled



³ Grigoriev I. Citizens of Belarus are for reforms, but without a shock. — *Vremia MN*, May 6, 2000, p.4.

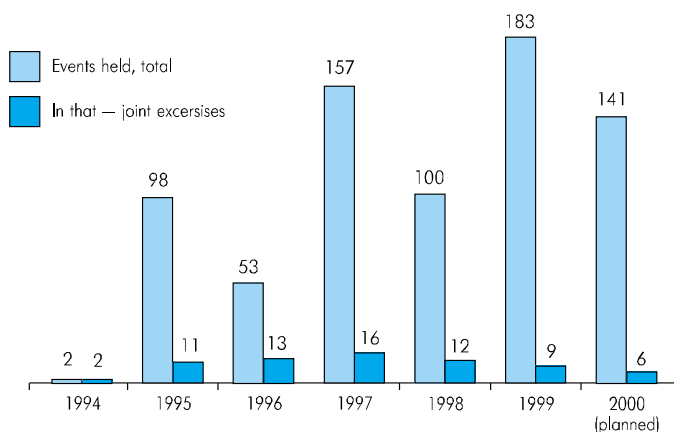
⁴ Russian poll of urban and rural populations. — The "Public Opinion" Foundation, Moscow, March 9, 2000.

a result of NATO enlargement, Ukraine can be drawn into opposition between Russia and NATO. At the same time, only 7% of those polled sees an immediate military threat in NATO enlargement.

TEMPTING, BUT PRICKLY...

Although NATO does not extend any security guarantees to Ukraine, it offers many opportunities for strengthening its security. To co-operate with Ukraine and other countries, NATO initiated the Partnership for Peace Programme (PfP). Within the framework of this Programme, each of the 27 partner nations is free to choose any events to its liking from a broad list of co-operative programmes. Those who are willing to do so, can improve their combat tactics, hold seminars, learn languages, or train in peacekeeping operations (*Diag. "Dynamics of Ukraine's co-operation with NATO"*). And all this for almost nothing, as the Alliance has covered nearly all of the expenses connected with Ukraine's participation in PfP events.

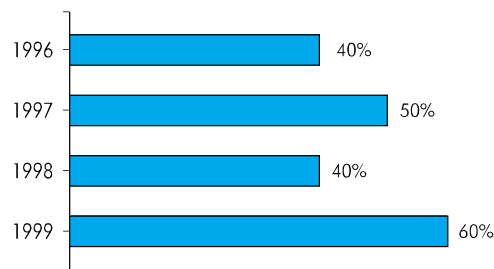
Dynamics of Ukraine's co-operation with NATO



However, we failed to employ those vast opportunities properly. There was a desire to bite off more than we could chew: over the last four years, Ukraine regularly planned to take part in around 300 events, but implemented roughly half of that amount with the same regularity (*Diag. "Ukraine's implementation of Individual Partnership Programme events"*), as our organisational capacity appeared to be beyond our capabilities. It was indeed difficult preparing the necessary documents, finding the right people, and allocating expenses (in those instances when NATO requested the Ukrainian side to cover at least part of the costs).

On the other hand, co-operation within the PfP framework was slowly but surely becoming more meaningful. For instance, at present, the

Ukraine's implementation of Individual Partnership Programme events, % of planned number



Ministry of Defence, which in 1995-1996 employed just one officer to deal with NATO (Lieutenant Colonel P.Kanana, who would toil like a workhorse), now operates an entire section staffed with qualified officers. Designated sections also work within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as well as other agencies.

It should be noted that today, few events fail because of the fault of the Ukrainian side. This year, the number is no longer a goal in itself; fewer events are planned, namely, those needed to strengthen national defence and provide interoperability with NATO for purposes of improving co-operation. An important precedent was established: at a meeting of the Ukraine-NATO Commission in Brussels on May 10 of this year, the Chief of the General Staff of the Armed Forces of Ukraine Colonel General V.Shkidchenko, for the first time spoke in English. Greater attention is now paid to foreign language lessons at Ukraine's military schools.

Provided that the vast experience already gained (*Table "Ukraine's co-operation with NATO in figures"*) is used effectively, good prospects exist for such forms of co-operation as interaction for eliminating the aftermath of emergencies, the participation of Ukrainian officers in the work of allied staffs (Russian officers are already there), NATO-led peacekeeping operations, military-technical co-operation, the retraining of retired officers, the employment of Ukrainian transport aircraft for military airlift operations, etc.

However, the public is not yet adequately informed about co-operation with NATO within the PfP framework (*Diag. "Awareness of citizens of Ukraine's participation in the events of NATO Partnership for Peace Programme"*).

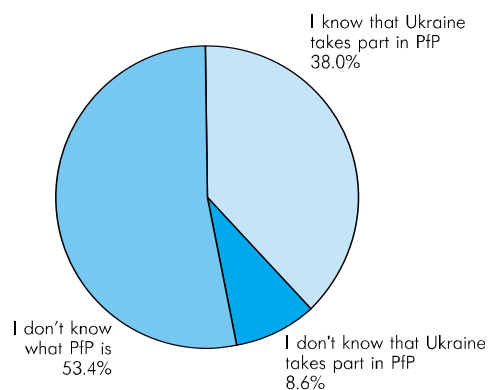
It came as a surprise that more than half of polled Ukrainians (53.4%) was unaware of NATO Partnership for Peace Programme. Another 8.6% of respondents does not know that Ukraine is a party to this Programme, while 38%



Ukraine's co-operation with NATO in figures, 1994-1999

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|--|-------------|
| Events within the framework of PfP | nearly 600 |
| Ukrainians involved in PfP activities | over 5000 |
| NATO grants to Ukrainian scholars | nearly 500 |
| Ukrainian scholars granted financial assistance for seminar participation and other events | over 700 |
| Ukrainians trained in NATO courses | over 800 |
| Retired servicemen trained in language courses (Kyiv, Rivne, Sevastopol, Uzyn) | 100 |
| Joint weapon systems projects | over 50 |
| Ukrainian servicemen who took part in NATO-led peacekeeping operations (IFOR, SFOR, KFOR) | nearly 6000 |

Awareness of citizens of Ukraine's participation in the events of NATO Partnership for Peace Programme, % of the polled



are aware of that fact. Among those who know what the PfP is, the attitude to it is mainly positive. Almost half (45.8%) of those believes that participation in this Programme strengthens Ukraine's security, and a third (35.2%), that such participation has no effect on our security. Only 9.4% is inclined to believe that such co-operation weakens Ukraine's security.

Most (56.2%) of those who are aware of NATO Partnership for Peace Programme believes that joint military exercises within this programme's framework raises the combat efficiency of Ukraine's Armed Forces. 24% of respondents doesn't think that such exercises in any way influence the combat efficiency of our Armed Forces, and 9.6% suggests that they undermine their combat capacity.

The survey's results demonstrate that people familiar with the PfP Programme are mostly positive toward NATO. That is, the more people know about PfP, the better their attitude toward

it. This, therefore, makes the conclusion possible, that if Ukrainians were better informed about the assistance rendered by NATO to Ukraine, they would be less critical of the Alliance.

It is interesting to note that peaceful Ukrainians attach priority to the non-military aspects of Ukraine-NATO co-operation in the scientific (27.8%) and political (21.9%) fields. Military and technical co-operation is assumed to be a priority by 15.2% of those polled, while only 4% believe the same to be the case with military co-operation. The remaining 15.3% holds to the opinion that Ukraine should not develop any forms of co-operation with NATO.

However, there are no reasons for optimism thus far: primarily those co-operative forms are usually being chosen that don't cost Ukraine anything. The answers given to the question regarding funding sources for Ukraine-NATO co-operation demonstrate the lack of a consensus concerning this issue. Respondents' views were divided almost equally. 23.1% is satisfied with Ukraine's "consumerism". These people believe that funds should be provided mainly by the Allies, as is the case today. 22.1% suggests that Ukraine should finance its own participation, and 20.3% — that NATO funds should be used only in extraordinary circumstances. Another 17.3% of those polled has a special opinion: they are convinced that Ukraine should not co-operate with NATO at all.

Despite some evident achievements, the experience of several years of Ukraine-NATO co-operation, unfortunately, proves the firmness of the Soviet bureaucratic heritage and its traditional suspicion of foreigners. Every once in a while, someone will say that something is "bugged" in computer classes being presented to

us, and at the right moment, all the information is transmitted to a satellite, or somewhere else... However, this suspicion does not prevent making requests of NATO for money, or travelling abroad at NATO expense. And the political winds also change at times, as well: either a Ukrainian battleship returns home after travelling halfway for an international exercise, or 240th peacekeeping battalion returns from Bosnia for unclear reasons. Meanwhile, the State Programme of Ukraine-NATO Co-operation through 2001 clearly states that "Ukraine's strategic goal is the fully-fledged integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, and full participation in the system of pan-European security". If we declared such a strategic (!) goal, then we probably should not spare any efforts toward its achievement. Or is it the case that we don't care about the end result?

...AND NOT TO RUSSIA'S LIKING

The role played by Russia in Ukrainians' attitude toward NATO should not be overlooked. 63% of those polled said that Ukraine should take Russia's stance into account with respect to Ukraine-NATO relations, while only 26.4% believes that Russia's position should be disregarded.

More than a third of respondents (37.6%) is convinced that relations between Russia and NATO will be tense for the next five years. 13.2% of Ukrainians agrees that in the five years to come, Russia and NATO will establish friendly relations. 9.9% believes that within that period of time, Russia will seek NATO membership, 6.1%, that the Alliance will want to see Russia in its ranks, while 4.6% suggests that Russia's accession to NATO will be desired by both Russia and NATO.

Russia itself⁵ is evidently hostile to Ukraine's co-operation with NATO. "Do you understand what NATO's presence in Ukraine means? It means that an hour after the start of hostilities, the Northern Caucasus will be cut off," prophesied A.Solzhnitsin⁶. Those sentiments are echoed by the Black Sea Fleet Commander Admiral V.Komoedov in *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*: "Such a "game" cannot but bother Russia... Face to Europe means back to Russia". Unfortunately, a jealous attitude toward

Ukraine's striving for European integration and drawing closer to NATO is inherent for the majority of Russians. Among factors seen by Russian experts as those most negatively affecting the attitude of Russians toward Ukraine, the 'further deepening of Ukraine's co-operation with NATO' occupies the first position: this opinion is shared by 84% of those polled⁷. At the same time, Russians tend to forget that the Founding Act on Mutual Relations, Co-operation and Security between NATO and the Russian Federation provides for much more effective mechanisms of co-operation with NATO for Russia, than the Charter on a Distinctive Partnership between NATO and Ukraine does for Ukraine. In particular, the Russia-NATO Act provides for the NATO-Russia Permanent Joint Council, while the NATO-Ukraine Charter only provides for consultations. Should not what is good for the goose also be good for the gander?

As the Kosovo events became a kind of watershed in the attitude of Ukrainians toward NATO, the same is true on the attitude of Russians toward Ukraine-NATO co-operation. Before the events in Yugoslavia, Russians looked at Ukraine-NATO co-operation mostly with contemptuous alertness. And after Ukraine refused to join Russia's boycott of NATO, their attitude became clearly hostile. This hostility was openly expressed during high-level meetings and in mass media, where statements such as "The extension of co-operation between Ukraine and NATO presents a *potential threat* for Russia" were heard⁸. Or they would again emphasise "the objective need for liquidating NATO, as the last largest relic of the 20th Century"⁹. The Martinet style of simplicity and specificity, just so as not to forget.

However, there are forces in Russia which realise the fallacy of this stance. For instance, the ex-Foreign Minister A.Kozyrev stated that "If we continue measuring our relations with Ukraine by the stupid yardstick of its rapprochement or non-rapprochement with NATO and the West as a whole, we will increase the dependence of both countries on the West, and lock ourselves in 'Asiaopa'"¹⁰. The usefulness of Ukraine's and Russia's joint movement toward Europe was supported by the vice-speaker of

⁵ When speaking about Russia's position, Moscow's voice is normally meant, mistaken for the opinion of the whole Russian state. Meanwhile, the voice of sacked and miserable Russian regions goes mostly unheard.

⁶ Kirillova S. The Patriarch and his adherents. — *Stolichnye Novosti*, May 23-29, 2000, p.11.

⁷ Chaly V., Pashkov M. International image of Ukraine: the view from Russia. — *National Security and Defence*, 2000, No.3, p.61.

⁸ Yuriev I. An ally or a geopolitical rival? — *Nezavisimoe Voennoe Obozrenie*, October 29, 1999, p.4.

⁹ Kliuchnikov V. At odds with the times. — *Krasnaya Zvezda*, August 12, 1999, p.3.

¹⁰ Kozyrev A. The road to Kiev lies via London. — *Vremia MN*, April 25 - May 1, 2000, p.5.



Russia's State Duma V.Lukin who spoke at an international seminar "Ukraine between Russia and the West. The strategy into the 21st Century", held in Kyiv on June 19-20, 2000.

Russians tend not to believe Z.Brzezinski, who told Russia's *Komsomolskaya Pravda* newspaper that "It would be a blessing for the whole world, including America, if Russia transforms into a modern, prosperous, democratic, non-imperial state", since he is in favour of NATO enlargement. Meanwhile, NATO is trying to convince Russians of the need for building partnership relations. The Alliance's Secretary General Lord Robertson spares no efforts in repeating: "We see Russia not as an enemy, but as a partner"¹¹. Nevertheless, they have failed to convince Russia of their sincerity. Indeed, Russia seeks equal rights with NATO in the resolution of European security issues, while NATO continues talking about "partnership", instead of "equality"...

The thesis of "equal rights" (without mentioning responsibilities) sounds good, if one forgets that the GDP of "Great Russia" is close to that of the "small Netherlands" (let alone France, once so loved by ourselves as a point of reference), and about the social rights of its citizens, Chechnia, and other similar things. But Russia has failed to convince Europe and the U.S. that nuclear missiles alone present a sufficient argument for *being respected*. This may be enough to cause *fear*, especially in the "near abroad", but in Europe, "fear" and "respect" are not the same.

There is a noticeable gap between Russia's ambitions to play a leading role in international security, and its real abilities to back those ambitions. Until Russia sobers up (turns into a democratic and non-imperial state), Ukraine will not feel safe. The West is more attractive for Ukrainians than the East. More than half of those polled (55.1%) believes that we should, first of all, seek EU membership, and only 5.2% give priority to NATO. Another 10% believes that NATO and the EU should be of equal priority. 17.9% of respondents is sure that Ukraine should strive for neither the EU nor NATO. This means that for Ukrainians, the EU is the most desired goal, as they associate their economic prosperity with this organisation.

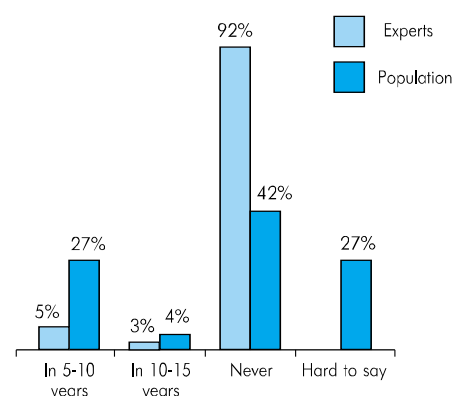
What does the West, represented by Mr. Brzezinski and Lord Robertson, mean for Ukrainians? For us, it normally means if not an ideal (especially after Kosovo), then freedom, democracy, wellbeing, and the real protection of human rights.

And what can we associate Russia with? Ahem... Russia, most likely, means: (a) the heroism of a great people permanently paying for the sins and drawbacks of its unworthy leaders; (b) a nation as poverty-stricken as we are, but more conceited, and lucky enough to sit on oilfields; (c) afflicted with a sense of inferiority, awkwardly attempting to prove its greatness; (d) endlessly searching for a national idea in the shadows of the Russian soul, etc.

What are those in Russia who don't care about the position and the intentions of Ukraine counting on? Are they hoping to frighten us by their military power, or by cutting the gas pipeline? Isn't it the fear of an inadequate response on the part of the 'great neighbour' that makes Ukrainians so cautious about Russia's position? How would Russians appreciate such a perception of their country? Or are they really hoping to ensnare Ukraine into the pro-Moscow Tashkent Pact? As it is not ripe enough to join it voluntarily.

Although Ukrainians are worried about Russia's stance regarding relations with NATO, the attitude of the public to Ukraine's accession to the Tashkent Treaty, led by Moscow, is approximately as cool as to joining NATO: 42.2% of respondents believes that Ukraine should never join this bloc; 26.5% suggests that this should occur in 5-10 years; 4.4% — in 10-15 years. It is natural that experts are still more reserved about Ukraine joining the Tashkent Treaty...

Ukraine should join the Tashkent Treaty,
% of the polled



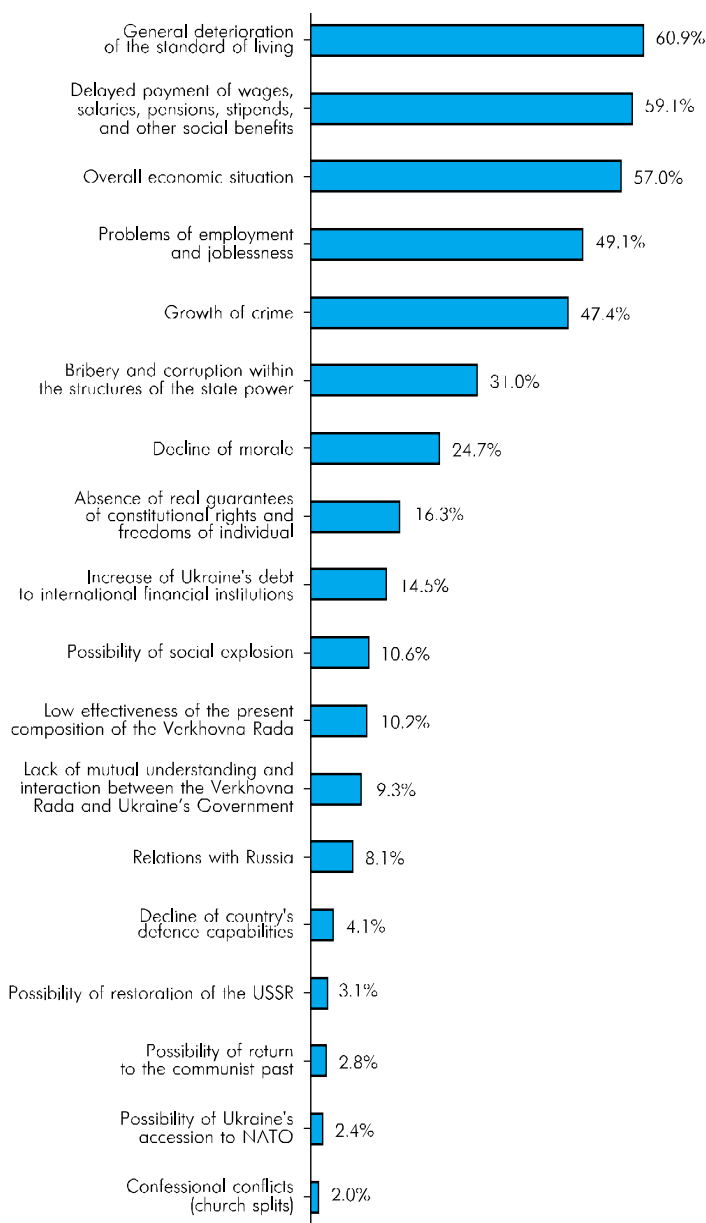
Regarding the most vital question for Ukraine of Russia-NATO relations, a third of those polled (33%) believes that in the event of a conflict between Russia and NATO, Ukraine should stay as neutral as possible. 18.3% of respondents suggests that Ukraine should be a

¹¹ See: Soloviov V. The Alliance and Russia have co-ordinated their positions. — *Nezavisimaya Gazeta*, May 24, 2000, p.5.

mediator in conflict settlements, and 15.7% — that Ukraine should think about who to take sides with, proceeding from its national interests. 23.7% of those polled suggests unconditional support for Russia, 3.2% — for NATO.

Ukrainians, therefore, although sympathetic with the “western way of life”, are unprepared to fight for it — they would be happy to somehow stay away from the contradictions between Russia and the West, and not to take sides with anyone. Maybe things will become settled one way or another...

Problems that bother Ukrainian citizens



NONE OF OUR BUSINESS... WILL WE GET AWAY THIS TIME?

At present, the majority of Ukrainians is not concerned about the prospects of co-operation with NATO but, above all, about economy problems. For instance, answers to the question about the most urgent current problems named primarily economic problems: the general deterioration of the standard of living (this problem worries 60.9% of respondents); delayed wages, pensions, and other payments (59.1%); the overall economic situation (57%); unemployment (49.1%). Political and defence issues are much less important. For instance, Ukraine's relations with Russia worry 8.1% of those polled, the decline in the country's defence capabilities — 4.1%, while the possibility of joining NATO — 2.4% (*Diag. "Problems that bother Ukrainian citizens"*).

When asked a direct question about the desired alternative of coexistence with NATO which would best suit Ukraine's interests, almost half of those polled (45.6%) suggests that Ukraine should choose a non-allied, neutral status. 11.7% would like Ukraine to join NATO together with other CIS countries, and 15.4% supports unconditional NATO membership. Ukraine's joining the Tashkent Treaty, as an alternative to NATO, was supported by only 7.9% of respondents, while 5.4% is irreconcilable regarding NATO. It is worth noting that Ukrainians are becoming more positive about neutrality: in 1997, only 22.7% of citizens spoke out in favour of the country's neutral, non-allied status¹².

It seems that out of the three possible foreign policy orientations — the West, the East, or neutrality (non-alliance) — Ukrainians are tempted to choose non-alliance (“it's none of my business”). They have nothing against improving their wellbeing, together with the West, but the latter (in the form of the EU) tends to put up barriers for the “poor”, and these attempts sometimes look insane. Meanwhile, some that are ‘just like us, but without the prehensile tail’, Estonians, for example, and others — managed to unite around a simple, clear, and exclusively national idea. They organised themselves, and are no longer strangers in Europe. We were not capable enough, and that's why we are “not” willing to. We do have our “own” pride.

Neutrality by itself could be a possible way out for us. Our Declaration of State Sovereignty announced our intention of becoming neutral. There are people in our country who sacredly believe in such a possibility, and propose taking immediate steps toward real neutrality¹³.

¹² Ukraine and NATO: the attitude of Ukraine's population to NATO. — The Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, "Democratic Initiatives" Foundation, January, 1997.



But this depends not only on our will. True (permanent) neutrality should be fixed in international treaties. The state should obligate itself not to participate in military conflicts between other countries, not to join military blocs and alliances, not to allow foreign troops and military bases on its territory (sic!). Permanent neutrality must be recognised by other countries.

Given our situation, we can talk ourselves hoarse declaring our neutrality, but won't get it, since its recognition requires that the main players in the region agree to Ukraine's neutrality, as was the case with Austria and Switzerland, or we should be rich, like Turkmenistan. Or united and determined to retaliate, like Finland and Sweden. Are we?

All neutral countries in Europe are clearly pro-Western. Austria, Ireland, Sweden, Switzerland and Finland are active participants of the PfP. There is no hesitation on their part, as on ours. Our hesitation already sandwiched weak, divided Ukraine between pressure from the East, and the West. We are trapped like a chased wolf. The space for manoeuvring is becoming increasingly narrower.

In this connection, rhetorical questions arise: Will Russia, whose population is dying out and destroying itself through drinking (the average level of strong drink consumption is almost double the level of degradation¹⁴), give up its attempts to reintegrate a 50 million-strong, mostly Slav region? Is Russia building naval bases for the Black Sea Fleet on its own territory in order to move it from the Crimea in 17 years (when the term of its stationing on Ukraine's territory expires)? Will the West risk quarrelling with nuclear Russia for 'undecided' Ukraine?

In current situation, Ukraine's ability to maintain its security is degrading at such a rate, that the first timid manifestations of economic recovery may be too late to stop this degradation. Maybe we should not wait while our Eastern "brothers" or "sisters" take us with their bare hands without asking our opinion, and decide by ourselves?

Because our own history proved repeatedly that hesitation won't bring any good. Hetman Bohdan Khmelnytskyi's banner once bore the letters "EK MJIO", that is, a Cyrillic abbreviation for His Royal Highness... And what came out of this?

SOME CONCLUSIONS FOLLOWING GLOOMY REFLECTIONS

For Ukrainians, NATO is: (a) a seemingly aggressive bloc which, for unknown reasons, does not pose any threat to Ukraine; (b) an alliance of democratic and rich countries unwilling to help Ukraine in the event of aggression against poor, half-democratic Ukraine. Consequently: (c) we do not entrust European security to the Alliance, and (d) our desire to join NATO is not very strong. At the same time, even a slight inclination toward joining NATO among Ukrainians is much stronger than among our Eastern Slavic neighbours — Belorussians and Russians.

Therefore, *the attitude toward NATO on the part of Ukraine's population is rather contradictory*. Ukrainians are clearly sympathetic to the "western way of life", but unprepared to fight for it; they would like to stay away from any disputes between Russia and the West, and not take any sides.

The most positive attitude toward NATO is demonstrated by those who know more about it (experts and people aware of the PfP Programme). Those who know less about NATO's activities are more negative, and sometimes hostile to NATO. Such an attitude is evidently based on poor information about NATO in the Ukrainian press, and mainly anti-NATO materials of Russian mass media which are much more accessible to the average Ukrainian than Western mass media.

No good will come of our "multi-vectored foreign policy". We should decide on our orientation, and not within the trite frame of reference — West or East, NATO or Russia. We should proceed from the values that are necessary for us: democracy, human rights and freedoms, wellbeing. Application for NATO membership is a formal question. The essence is the sincere readiness to strengthen co-operation with NATO.

NATO presents opportunities, but cannot maintain a country: it should finally rise and invent mechanisms for co-operation. Of course, it would be better for Ukraine to move toward NATO together with Russia, but we cannot wait forever while Russia becomes ready for that.

The availability or, rather, the non-availability of funds should not be the decisive factor

¹³ Pavlenko A. Ukraine, non-allied and neutral... — *Narodna Armiya*, May 30, 2000, p.6.

¹⁴ Vodka and Centralization, Shaken Not Stirred. — *STRATFOR.COM*, June 8, 2000, p.1.

in our co-operation with NATO. If we want to be reckoned with, we should demonstrate our ability to reform the economy and the defence sector, since it is not enough to declare the neutrality that is so dear to us: it should be secured.

As far as the “multi-vector foreign policy” proclaimed by Ukraine is concerned, this phenomenon can be said to be traditional for Ukrainians: one should recall the classic play “Chasing two hares”. The desire to grasp everything is understandable, but everyone knows how the literary masterpiece ends. To be sure, there are no grounds for counting on better

results in the political “masterpiece”. Unfortunately, examples do not only exist in literature: in Ukraine's history, there were instances where our ancestors hesitated when an alternative was available, wasted time and, finally, were forced to do what external circumstances demanded: there was no more choice left, for others made their choice, and not we. If we are prudent, we should learn from mistakes, rather than repeat them. Now, we still have a choice, and should make it. Such an opportunity will not last forever, and if we don't make a decision, others will do so instead.

